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Homework and Family Stress: With Consideration of Parents' Self Confidence, Educational Level, and Cultural Background

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Family stress was examined in the context of children's homework load and parents' perception of their capacity to assist their children with homework. Homework load was measured utilizing the 10 Minute Rule promulgated by the National Education Association. Family stress, measured by self-report, increased as homework load increased and as parent's perception of their capacity to assist decreased. Contrary to the 10 Minute Rule, primary school children received about three times the recommended load of homework. The amount of homework load reported also varied significantly between English and Spanish speakers, as it did between parents with limited education and those with advanced education.

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Homework is variously regarded as a necessary component to education, a worrisome reality for youth, and source of stressful interaction between parents and children. Teachers, struggling to fit core curricula into an already full day of classes, use homework to meet academic requirements. Students carrying backpacks over-filled with books, papers and electronic devices (such as tablets and smartphones) have become a commonplace sight in primary, middle, and high schools across the country, as they carry their work with them (Katz, Buzukashvili, & Feingold, 2012). Furthermore, many parents struggle to balance extra-curricular activities with homework requirements, while some additionally struggle to assist their children in completing their homework. It is not surprising, then, that the topic of homework is controversial and the overall benefits are being questioned. The gauntlet for the "homework wars" was, in fact, laid down by Edward Bok, in *A National Crime at the Feet of American Parents* published in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1900. That war, now in its second century, has not abated.

While the amount of homework students receive has gotten considerable press and attention, there is little evidence that there has been any significant increase in homework amount over the past 30–50 years (Loveless, 2014; Gill & Schlossman, 2003; Gill & Schlossman, 2004). And yet, despite homework being an omnipresent factor in the lives of most school-aged children, research has been equivocal about the relationship of homework load and its association with student achievement (Cooper & Valentine, 2001; Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Dettmers, Trautwein, & Lüdtke, 2009; Luo et al., 2014).

The question of "How much homework is desirable?" has been substantially addressed by Cooper (Cooper & Valentine, 2001; Cooper, 2006). Ten minutes multiplied by the child's grade level was the recommended allotted time for nightly homework. Teachers would, therefore, assign about 10 minutes of nightly homework for first graders and this expectation would increase to 120 minutes for seniors in high school. The "10 Minute Rule" was purported to be embraced and promulgated by National Education Association (2006). Notwithstanding the acceptance of this recommendation, there is evidence suggesting that, since its adoption, the amount of homework being assigned to lower grade levels has increased beyond the guidelines (Loveless, 2014). In our study, we explored the adherence to the 10 Minute Rule. Homework has been cited as a common—and sometimes major—source of stress and conflict between parents and children (Katz, Buzukashvili, & Feingold, 2012; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2006). Several factors may mediate the homework-stress relationship. Homework may supplant more enjoyable family leisure pursuits. When homework routines conflict with family leisure time and other family routines, homework has been found to be associated with lower measures of emotional well-being among children and parents across several studies (Katz, Buzukashvili, & Feingold, 2012; Offer, 2013).

Another mediating factor is the parent's perceived self-efficacy in academic areas associated with the homework. When parents perceive greater

efficacy to help their children succeed in school, they tend to engage more with their child's school which, in turn, promotes positive academic outcomes for children through high school (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). Specifically, when parents feel greater self-efficacy, they also report greater home-based involvement. Children who have parents with greater self-efficacy to help in academic realms are also likely to have parents who are more involved with children's homework. In turn, it is probable that these children will experience better academic outcomes coupled with less school-related stress at home (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007).

Parents may feel even greater pressure to be involved in their children's homework when their children struggle with academically related tasks. However, while parents may believe they are helping with homework, in actuality, their "assistance" may cause tension or confusion for the child (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Pressman, Nemon, Owen, & Schettini, 2014). When parents are overly negative or controlling, children tend to be lower achieving. Children are particularly vulnerable to negative parental involvement with homework when they are struggling academically. Moreover, when parents are inappropriately involved in children's homework or household chores, their children's emotional well-being may suffer (Offer, 2013). When parents are involved in their children's homework in ways that are controlling or negative, children are more likely to experience negative academic outcomes that involve grades and self-confidence (Pressman, Nemon, Owen, & Schettini, 2014). These negative outcomes could be related to higher parent-child conflict surrounding homework, children's greater dislike of homework, and higher family stress related to homework. In contrast, parents who are involved in positive ways with children's homework, allowing them to take initiative, to solve their own problems, to focus on the joys of learning, and only help when needed, tend to have children who are higher achieving (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007).

Martinez (2011) posits that children who believe they cannot turn to their parents for help with homework are vulnerable to negative academic outcomes. Further, although many parents seem to be providing emotional support, Martinez suggests that Latino students are more likely to believe that they cannot go to their parents for homework assistance; they perceive that their parents may have too many educational and language deficits to adequately provide them with help. Further implied is that many of these students report feeling overwhelmed by or unmotivated to complete their homework tasks. Conversely, students from Latino families who achieve higher levels of academic success (i.e., homework completion, higher GPAs, etc.), tend to have parents who boast higher educational levels, incomes, and English-language proficiency, and are often actively involved in academic realms (Keith & Lichtman, 1994).

Latino families may be further at risk for impeding their children's homework success with regard to constructing at-home environments that are con-

ducive to academic progress. In comparison to Eastern European and Asian immigrant families, Latino parents are less likely to implement educational achievement practices, such as setting a regular bedtime or restricting screen time (Vera, Israel, Coyle, Cross, & Knight-Lynn, 2012). Moreover, Vera and colleagues found that Latino families were less likely than their counterparts to report monitoring homework progress and completion. Lopez (2007) concluded that language barriers of exclusively Spanish-speaking parents were a probable contributor to negativity toward their children's schools.

Further, higher family stress surrounding homework also seems to be associated with students' academic achievement—regardless of whether children are of White, African American, or Latino racial descent (Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Lugo-Gil & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; Raver, Gershoff, & Aber, 2007). Lower achievement among children could certainly include a greater dislike of homework (e.g., Wingard, 2009). Wingard's ethnographic research results support the notion that homework can be a problematic domain of family life, a common source of everyday family tension, and a frequently disliked activity among children.

Our study examines predictors of family homework stress when providing homework assistance, children's feelings of dislike for homework, and parental expectations to help with homework. Additionally, we focus on differences among these variables between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families, as the latter compose the largest minority population in the United States (Ramirez, 2004).

Based on the results of past studies, we developed five main hypotheses:

1. As children progress from 1st to 12th grade, average homework load will increase approximately 10 additional minutes per grade level;
2. As caregivers' perceived efficacy in their ability to aid their children declines, family-related stress increases;
3. There is a positive association between the child's dislike of homework and homework related stress;
4. As parents perceive a greater need to be involved in a child's homework, family stress increases.
5. Spanish-speaking families will experience higher levels of homework stress than English-speaking families.

METHOD

Participants

A total 1173 parent respondents participated in the study. All parents had children in grades kindergarten (K) through high school (grade 12) and frequented one of 27 pediatric offices in the Greater Providence area of Rhode

Island. In the spring data collection period, there were 566 respondents: 448 identified as mothers, 86 identified as fathers, and 32 did not self-identify as either a mother or as a father. In the fall data collection period, there were 607 respondents: 482 identified as mothers, 93 identified as fathers, and 32 did not self-identify as either a mother or as a father. In the spring, two-thirds (66.2%) of the respondents elected to complete the questionnaire in English while the remaining third (33.8%) chose to complete the survey in Spanish. This was similar in the fall, where 67.3% of respondents elected to take the questionnaire in English and 32.7% of respondents completed it in Spanish.

Survey Instrument

For this study, a self-administered 46-item questionnaire was developed, which could be completed in the waiting room of the pediatrician's office. The survey contained questions that explored the demographics related to the parent: age, race/ethnicity, gender, education level, and number of children; similar information was requested about the chosen child. Another set of questions focused on homework issues: the amount of homework received, the number of days and weekends spent working on homework, the length of time it took to complete homework, school expectations regarding homework, parent engagement with homework, and the potential loss of extracurricular activities as a result of homework. This was supplemented by questions regarding the target child's grade point average (GPA), academic performance, stress (for both youth and family), focus, sleep habits, and chores. Most questions were followed using five-point Likert scales, with anchors ranging from "Rarely" to "Usually." At conclusion of the questionnaire, parents were asked if their child had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan and their experiences in trying to get help or assistance for their child at school.[1]

The questionnaire was written in English and then translated into Spanish by a professional translator. To test the authenticity of the translation, another translator, operating blindly, translated the questionnaire back to English. No substantive differences between the re-translated copy and the original English copy were found.

Bi-lingual (Spanish and English) Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certified research assistants distributed and collected the questionnaires. All responses to the questionnaires ($n = 1173$) were loaded into a statistical software database (SPSS version 22.0) and analyzed. Redundant entry was executed to test for accuracy.

Procedure

The survey was conducted at two separate points within one calendar year; once in the spring (May and June) and once in the fall (September and October). The survey was conducted using convenience and purposive sampling;

specifically, targeting parents at pediatric offices (n = 27) within the Greater Providence area of Rhode Island. The survey was available every day the offices were open, throughout full hours of operation.

Respondents received a paper survey, along with a pencil and instructions that included study information (i.e., purpose, use), confidentiality clauses, study contact information, and anticipated time to complete the survey. A research assistant was available to assist, but was required to follow a script. Once the respondent completed the survey, it was placed in an envelope, sealed, and inserted in a drop box. These boxes were collected daily, with all surveys remaining sealed, until they arrived at the office for data upload into the SPSS.

Both topic and design of the study had built in limiting factors. Because it was constructed to be completed while parent and child were waiting to be seen at the pediatrician's office, the survey was limited in the number of items that could be presented. In addition, we had no objective means to establish the actual amount of homework, GPA, or family stress, e.g., in home observation or securing transcripts. Instead, we utilized parents' perception of these variables, which we found to be practical and adequate at this stage of exploration. Finally, the concept of the actual amount of homework the child received, was itself problematic. Some children finish all or part of their homework at school or on a school bus; some parents differentiate between reading activities and all other forms of home study. We did not account for these factors in our study.

Selected Variables for Analysis

Descriptive data was analyzed to determine frequencies and representativeness. Specific descriptive variables were used to further determine significant differences between groups (i.e., grade level, English-speaking versus Spanish-speaking households, etc.).

For data analysis, there was focus on parents' reports regarding the amount of time their children spent on homework and their agreement or disagreement on several 5-point Likert scale questions such as 1) There are arguments or disagreements among the adults in my family about my child's homework; 2) The school expects parents to help with the homework; 3) Parents need to teach the material; and 4) My child has said that s/he dislikes homework. Furthermore, parents also answered what kind of effect their children's homework had on the family, with higher rankings being associated with more positive effects.

RESULTS

There were 1173 respondents to the questionnaire of which 566 responded in the spring and 607 responded in the fall. Approximately two-thirds of all

respondents utilized an English questionnaire, while one-third responded in Spanish. Seventy-nine percent of all respondents identified as mothers, while 15% identified as fathers and 6% did not self-identify as a mother or a father. Of the 1173 parents who responded, nearly half (47%) had a household with two children, about one-fourth had a household with one child (26%), and the remaining one-fourth (27%) had three or more children in the home. Just over half of all respondents indicated that their child was Hispanic/Latino (51.8%).

The grade range for respondents' children was relatively evenly spread across all grades, with the largest groups being kindergarten (13%) and sixth graders (10%) and the smallest groups being eleventh graders (4%) and eighth graders (5%). The average size of respondents per grade was 7.7% with a standard deviation for all grades of 0.5.

Forty percent of the respondents indicated they held a high school diploma or general education diploma/degree (GED), while an additional 25% indicated they had some college. About 16% stated they were college graduates and 7% held a post-graduate degree. Of interest, 13% of respondents had some high school but had not acquired a diploma or GED.

We compared the amounts of homework that children brought home from school across grade levels, as reported by their parents. Next, we determined the associations among caregivers' comfort with helping on homework, the child's dislike of homework, parental expectations to help with homework, and homework-related stress among families. In particular, we examined how each of these former variables was predictive of homework stress in families. Finally, we explored whether any significant differences appeared between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families with regard to these variables and homework stress.

Hypothesis 1: As Children Progress From 1st to 12th Grade, Average Homework Load Will Increase Approximately 10 Additional Minutes Per Grade Level.

Overall, the actual homework load increased as students progress from kindergarten (K) until 12th grade, with a significant spike in the 6th and 7th grades and the largest average amount of time in the 10th grade at 53.9 minutes per night. As previous studies suggested, there is a steady increase in primary school, but not at a rate of 10 minutes per grade. (See Figure 1.) Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Further, there is consistency in high school (9th through 12th grade) at about an hour per night.

The data was then analyzed by ethnicity, specifically examining parent responses that identified their children as Hispanic or non-Hispanic. (See Figure 2.) While there was consistency between the two groups in early primary school (kindergarten and 1st grades), there is a significant shift be-

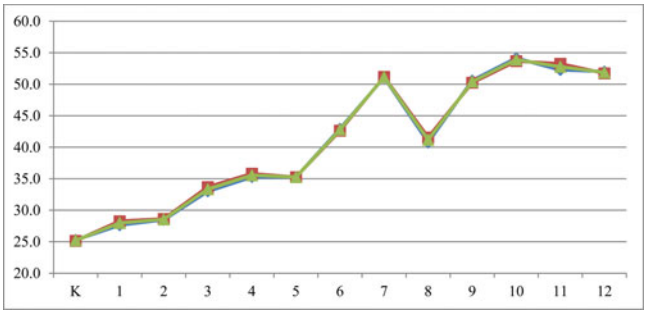

FIGURE 1 Reported time spent on homework (in minutes) by grade.

tween self-identified Hispanic and non-Hispanic children starting in the second grade. Parents of Hispanic children noted higher rates of homework in the 2nd, 3rd, and 12th grades. Alternatively, parents of non-Hispanic children perceived significantly higher rates of homework throughout all of middle school (6th, 7th, and 8th grades), as well as 10th and 11th grades. An independent samples t-test analysis indicated that the difference in homework load between the 570 identified Hispanic children (mean = 37.7 minutes) and the 546 non-Hispanic children (mean = 43.1 minutes) differed reliably ($t = -2.89$, $p < 0.01$).

An analysis of perceived homework load by parent educational status was also examined. (See Figure 3.) Throughout primary school, parents across all educational levels indicated similar rates of homework load. However, during middle school and high school, perceived rates shifted dramatically. For parents with less than high school or a high school diploma/GED educational level, there was a distinct drop in perceived homework load in middle school. In the 7th grade in particular, parents with less than a high school education estimated that their child spent 25.8 minutes per night on homework, while parents with some college education cited a nightly homework rate of 82.5 minutes per night, a variance range of almost one hour (56.7 minutes). Further, we see an additional spike in perceived home-

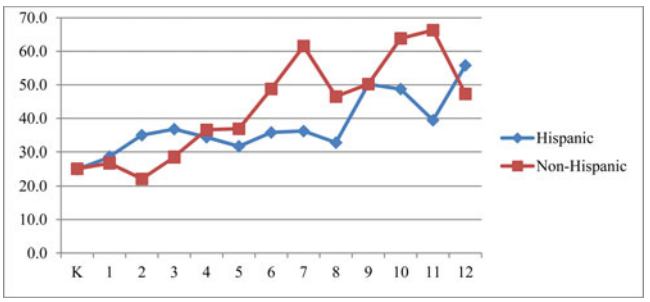

FIGURE 2 Reported time spent on homework (in minutes) by self-identified ethnicity.

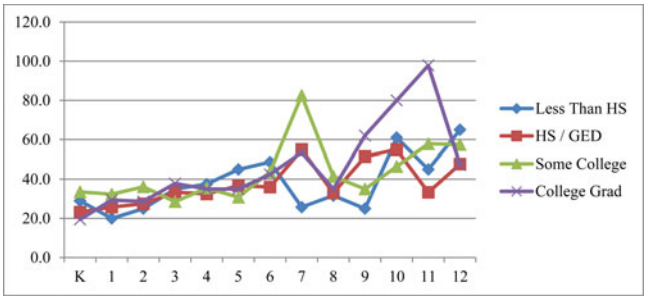

FIGURE 3 Reported time spent on homework (in minutes) by parent/caregiver education level.

work load—particularly among parents who are college graduates— who indicated an average nightly homework rate of 97.9 minutes. This is in stark contrast to parents with a high school diploma or GED (33.3 minutes) and parents with less than a high school education (45.0 minutes).

In summary, primary grade children were spending more time on homework than was expected, until about the 3rd grade. Meanwhile, high school students were spending just under an hour on homework, which was substantially less time than expected (i.e., 90 to 120 minutes). Loveless' thesis (2014) that there has been a significant increase in the amount of homework being assigned to lower grade levels was supported. In fact, K through 2nd grade students are carrying as much as three times the recommended homework load.

Hypothesis 2: As Caregivers' Perceived Efficacy in Their Ability to Aid Their Children Declines, Family-Related Stress Increases.

A correlational analysis was conducted using two target variables: caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework and perceived family stress and tension. The data suggested significant correlation between caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework and family-related stress (r (df) $= -0.21$, $p < 0.001$). As caregivers expressed decreasing degrees of comfort with assisting their child with homework, there was an increase in family stress and tension. Thus, the hypothesis was supported that, as caregivers' perceived efficacy in their ability to aid their children declines, there is an increase in family-related stress.

This was further supported by a significant correlation between caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework and the perceived effect the child's homework had on the family (r (df) $= 0.27$, $p < 0.001$). We found that as caregivers' perceived efficacy in their ability to aid their chil-

dren declined, the more likely they were to perceive homework as having a negative impact on their family.

Hypothesis 3: There Is a Positive Association Between the Child's Dislike of Homework and Homework Related Stress. Thus, as a Child's Dislike of Homework Increases, so Does Family Stress.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the degree to which family stress and tension would be predicted by three variables: caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework, parental expectations to help with homework, and a child's dislike of homework. The multiple regression model with all four predictors produced $R^2 = 0.122$, $F(3, 1071) = 49.47$, $p < 0.001$. After controlling for the other variables in the model, children who disliked homework had significant positive regression weights ($\beta = 0.28$), indicating that children who dislike homework are also more likely to be in homes that experience higher stress and tension. The caregivers' level of comfort in their ability to help with homework had a significant negative weight ($\beta = -0.16$), indicating that after accounting for children who dislike homework, those households with higher concerns about caregivers' level of comfort in their ability to help with homework were expected to have a lower impact to family stress and tension (a suppressor effect). Parental expectations to help with homework did not contribute to the multiple regression model. In summary, the results indicate that caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework and the child's dislike of homework are significant factors, explaining 12.2% of the variance in reported family stress and tension.

Multiple regression analyses were also conducted to examine the relationship between the three target variables: caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework, parental perceived expectations to help with homework, and a child's dislike of homework. Moreover, we examined the ability to *predict* family stress and tension, along with two additional variables: arguments with the child about homework or disagreements among the adults in the household about the child's homework. The multiple regression model with all six predictors produced $R^2 = 0.194$, $F(4, 1052) = 63.173$, $p < 0.001$: arguments among adults in the household over child's homework ($\beta = 0.28$), arguments with the child over their homework ($\beta = 0.09$), and children that disliked their homework ($\beta = 0.08$). After controlling for the other variables in the model, all six predictors had significant positive regression weights, indicating that homes with higher rates of stress and tension are more likely to have adults and children arguing over homework, as well as children who dislike their homework. The caregivers' level of comfort in their ability to help with homework had a significant negative weight ($\beta = -0.13$), indicating that after accounting for arguments in the home and

children who dislike homework, there was likely to be less stress and tension in the family (a suppressor effect). In summary, the results indicate that arguments among adults and children along with a child's dislike of homework and caregivers' level of comfort in ability to help with homework are significant factors, explaining 19.4% of the variance in reported family stress and tension.

Hypothesis 4: As Parents Perceived a Greater Need to be Involved in a Child's Homework, We Anticipated an Increase in Family Stress.

Correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the parent's perceived expectations to help their children with homework and family stress. These variables were also correlated with the child's grade point average (GPA). No significant correlation was found between perceived expectations to help with homework and family stress and tension. However, a significant correlation was found between the child's GPA and family stress ($r = -0.20$, $p < 0.001$); as well as, a significant correlation between the child's GPA and perceived expectations to help with homework ($r = -0.11$, $p < 0.001$). The relationship between the child's GPA and family stress was negative, indicating that as the child's GPA decreased, family stress and tension increased. Similarly, as the child's GPA decreased the perceived expectations to help with homework increased. In short, GPA was more likely to contribute to family stress and tension than perceived expectations to help their child with homework.

Hypothesis 5: Spanish-Speaking Families Would Experience Higher Levels of Stress Around Homework Than Would English-Speaking Families.

Correlational analysis was conducted to determine any differences in homework-related issues, as well as family stress and tension, between the English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking families in the sample studied. Correlational analyses revealed a slight but significant association between participants' primary language and a child's dislike of homework ($r = -0.09$, $p < 0.01$) as well as a slight but significant relationship between arguments and disagreements among adults about the child's homework and the respondent's primary language ($r = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$). Also of interest was a slight but significant association between families that self-identified their child as Hispanic and parental arguments with the child about homework ($r = -0.07$, $p < 0.05$). In summary, Spanish-speaking families reported a

higher, although slight, level of family stress surrounding homework, when compared to their English-speaking counterparts.

DISCUSSION

Based on our review, we sought to bring clarity to five assumptions regarding homework and its relation to emotional equilibrium of the family. A pivotal assumption was that the homework load, per the 10 Minute Rule, would be manifested in a steady increase in homework load from K–12th grade; thus our first hypothesis: *As children progress from 1st to 12th grade, average homework load will increase approximately 10 additional minutes per grade level*.

Our results did not support this assumption. Although the overall load of homework assigned per day generally increased as students progressed from grades 1 through 12, we found that the increases in homework load were inconsistent across all grade levels. More specifically, parents of primary grade students reported that their children were spending substantially more time on homework than we expected; while parents of high school students reported that their adolescents were spending substantially less time on homework than we expected. First graders had three times the homework load recommended by the NEA, while 12th graders had half the anticipated load.

The 10 Minute Rule does not give a figure for recommended Kindergarten homework load. Yet, in our study, we found that the average homework load for Kindergarten was *25 minutes per day*, which may be both taxing for the parents and overwhelming for the children. Further, in a period of life when children are focused on early stages of socialization and finessing motor skills, we anticipate that an overload of homework will likely interfere with a Kindergarten-aged child's ability to play and participate in extra-curricular activities. Additional research here is indicated.

The usefulness for the loading of homework toward children in grades 1 through 3 has not been supported in the literature. Although homework studies that compare achievement vs homework load have been equivocal, the general consensus is that excessive homework not only shows no benefit, but may be detrimental. (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006; Pressman, Nemon, Evans, & Schettini, 2014).

The disproportionate homework load for K–3 found in our study calls into question whether primary school children are being exposed to a positive learning experience or to a scenario that may promote negative attitudes toward learning.

We found support for two hypotheses, which taken together, present a conundrum. These were:

1. As parents' perceived efficacy in their ability to aid their children declines, there will be an increase in family stress.
2. As parents perceived a greater need to be involved in a child's homework, there will be increase in family stress.

Putting aside the debate, as to whether or not homework is academically beneficial, comes, perhaps, a more relevant debate: ought a parent to be involved in a child's homework at the instructional level? The conundrum relates to educational inequities among public school students who come from families with one parent, whose parent may be unavailable at homework time, and/or may not have the education, temperament, or language proficiency to assist the child vs. students who come from families with two parents, one or both of whom are available, and may have educational training and/or temperament to provide their children with instruction. It may be argued, that the expectation that parents provide instructive guidance to a child with his homework, would be, through no fault of the child, a benefit to some children and a detriment to others.

Ironically, parents' successful intervention of teaching or correcting assignments may obscure teachers from discovering academic problems or needs of the child. Additionally, there is an emerging body of evidence that such assistance may even be academically and behaviorally detrimental. (Donaldson-Pressman, Jackson, & Pressman, 2014). Considering the overload of homework in primary grades, there exists the possibility that a high degree of parent correction and instruction, in early grades, may result in a pattern of academic dependency that persists thorough a child's senior year. (Donaldson-Pressman, Jackson, & Pressman, 2014).

In brief, the case for having parental involvement *at the instructional level* with a child's homework, appears to be outweighed by negative sociological, emotional, and educational consequences.

Although the hypothesis that there will be a positive association between the child's dislike of homework and homework stress was supported, we found that a parent's self-appraised ability to help their child with homework mitigated the strength of reported family stress. Once again, we see competency surface into the equation and possible inequities among students who come from families of varied parental competence.

A substantial portion of our participants spoke Spanish. Lopez (2007) and others have suggested that Spanish-speaking families may feel ostracized from their child's school, due to language or cultural barriers. Our finding regarding homework load and family stress for Spanish speaking families gave indicators of problems, but could not be explained within the context of this study. Further research is indicated.

We hypothesized that Spanish-speaking families would experience higher levels of stress around homework than would English-speaking families. Although the hypothesis was supported, the effect was small. It should

be noted that, after the data collection phase of our study, we learned *that culturally, the word "stress" may have a different and greater negative connotation, among Spanish speakers*, than among English speakers. The effect may have suppressed Spanish speakers from attributing stress to their families. This is also fodder for additional study.

Another unexplained phenomenon occurred with homework load. Homework load reported by Spanish speaking parents for students in grades 1 through 2 was greater than it was for non-Spanish speakers. However, the homework load for children above grade four by Spanish-speaking parents was lower than the homework load reported by non-Spanish–speaking parents. Lopez's material might suggest that Spanish speaking parents experienced a sense of disengagement or isolation from their children's homework as the work became more complex and the issue of language became more prevalent. Additional research will be needed to shed light on the issues of homework related stress and homework load found in Spanish speaking families.

CONCLUSIONS

In our review, we found concurrence that homework be limited and thoughtfully applied to primary school children. In addition, there is a body of evidence to support the thesis that an overload of homework is associated with a decrement in performance. Nonetheless, it was unsettling to find that in our study population, first and second grade children had three times the homework load recommended by the NEA. Although the 10 Minute Rule has been apparently endorsed by the NEA since 2006, we did not find evidence that this standard was being uniformly applied. Further investigation is necessary to determine if our findings generalize beyond our specific study population.

We found that homework load, parents' view of self-efficacy in assisting with homework, and language/cultural factors were all contributors to family stress. Additionally, we found that a major part of this picture was the expectation, among parents, that they assist their children with homework at the instructional level. Because of the variability in parents' knowledge, skill, and availability, we wondered about the wisdom of this expectation. Moreover, it raises a question of inadvertent educational discrimination against families who may be disadvantaged because the parents may be: Spanish speakers; unavailable to assist their child; limited in skill, knowledge or temperament to teach their child.

Based on our findings we recommend:

1. Reforming the distribution of primary school homework to conform to the 10 Minute Rule.

2. Creating homework that is interactive and real world applicable, (e.g., math used to help build a birdhouse, compute money needed to buy a toy at the store, or balance a checkbook) so the family experiences it together in a meaningful way.
3. Restructuring homework so that parents perform as mentors and/or agents of support rather than as tutors or instructors (Donaldson-Pressman, Jackson & Pressman, 2014):
   a. Providing the child with appropriate tools to execute the homework.
   b. Making available a designated quiet place for the child to study.
   c. Insuring that the child is actually in that place at a designated time, for the recommended time per grade, and distraction free.

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NOTE

1. Survey items are available through correspondence with lead researcher, Robert M. Pressman, Ph.D.

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